

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Tuesday, 19 January 1999, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Grey (United States of America)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 808th plenary meeting of the Conference and the first part of its 1999 session.

At the outset of this new session, I would like to offer a final farewell to those colleagues who have left the Conference since we adjourned in September: Ambassadors Sánchez Arnau of Argentina, Castro Guerrero of Colombia, Tarmidzi of Indonesia, Lamdan of Israel, Krasnohorská of Slovakia and Norberg of Sweden. I am confident you will join me in asking that their delegations convey to them our deep appreciation for their many valuable contributions to our endeavours here, as well as our sincere wish for their success and satisfaction in their new assignments.

It is also a great pleasure to extend a cordial welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed the responsibility of representing their countries to the Conference: Ambassadors González of Argentina, Reyes Rodríguez of Colombia, Wirajuda of Indonesia, Peleg of Israel, Suchánková of Slovakia and Molander of Sweden. We look forward to working with them in pursuing our common goals.

I should also like to welcome the presence among us today of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, who is in Geneva in connection with the thirty-second session of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. I am sure we are all grateful to him for his abiding interest in our endeavours and for his support to the Conference.

I would now like to address you in my temporary role as President of the Conference. In personal terms, this is a sobering responsibility, especially since receiving the job reflects the vagaries of the alphabet rather than merit. For my part, I assure you I shall devote my full energy and attention to promoting our shared endeavours in strict accordance with our agreed rules of procedure. I am the servant of the Conference, neither its coach nor its cheerleader. That having been said, I hope and believe that members of the Conference are willing to work together to build a firm but flexible foundation for our efforts this year.

On behalf of all of us, please allow me to express our deep appreciation to my predecessor, Ambassador Soutar of the United Kingdom, for his skilful and productive steering of the Conference last August and September, and for the many valuable insights he has shared with me. His work has left us a sound basis for renewed endeavours in 1999.

I am also grateful to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the CD and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the CD, and to all other staff of the Secretariat for their able and indispensable support.

At the outset of its 1998 session, the Conference carried out extended and comprehensive discussions, seeking to develop an overall approach to its work that would adequately reflect the goals and interests of all delegations. The task proved intricate and arduous, and several successive Presidents

(The President)

devoted intense effort to it. I am therefore convinced that we must treat last year's arrangements with respect, for it would be rash of us to set aside or disregard the complex and balanced compromises which eventually emerged.

To say this another way, I believe the organizational patterns we adopted in 1998 offer a prudent and appropriate basis for starting our work this year - especially since some of the most important decisions were taken only in the last few weeks of the session. Beginning in December, I have had the opportunity to discuss this bilaterally with almost all of you. As a result, I can report that there is strong support for the idea that the Conference should start off from where we found ourselves when we adjourned in September.

In my capacity as President, I have asked my predecessor, Ambassador Soutar of the United Kingdom, and my successor, Ambassador Rodríguez Cedeño of Venezuela, to join with me in considering appropriate methods and approaches for dealing with the topics that fell under last year's agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". I suggested to them that we undertake this task as an interim step, pending adoption of this year's work programme elements and without prejudice to subsequent decisions of the Conference. My two colleagues have agreed, believing that it is the sense of this Conference that efforts on this important subject should continue unabated.

I should now like to invite the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, to inform us on some organizational aspects of the current session.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): As you are aware, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, will be addressing the Conference at its plenary meeting on Tuesday, 26 January this year, and therefore I shall confine my remarks to some organizational aspects of the 1999 session.

As you know, the Secretariat is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to inform the Conference on the services available to it during its annual sessions. During its 1999 session, the Conference will be allocated 10 meetings per week with full services. In other words, we should be able to hold two daily meetings with full services throughout the whole of the session.

I hardly need to emphasize the seriousness of the financial situation of our organization and, under the current circumstances, it is essential that the Conference makes the best possible use of the resources allocated to it. The Conference has, in the past, shown great flexibility in using the time allocated to it and I am sure that this will also be the case this year. I should like to remind you also that punctuality in starting meetings is very important and that, as usual, meetings with full services cannot be held in the evenings or during weekends.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference
on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the
Secretary-General of the United Nations)

The situation with regard to documentation in the United Nations continues to be the source of serious concern, and the capacity of the language services is now stretched to its limits. Therefore, the measures already observed by the Conference concerning savings in documentation continue to be valid. In particular, all documents need to be presented well in advance and duplication of documentation should be avoided. In this respect, I should like to once again draw the attention of the Conference to the fact that United Nations regulations do not permit the translation and distribution of statements delivered by delegations in plenary meetings as separate CD documents, since they are already part of the verbatim records. I am sure that I can count on your full cooperation in exercising every restraint, wherever possible, in the control of documentation.

I would also like to recall that, as part of the Secretariat's efforts to reduce expenditure, the following changes were made in the provision of services to the meeting rooms as of March 1996. Only documents containing draft proposals which require action will be circulated in the meeting room. Pre-session and reference documents will continue to be supplied to the permanent and observer missions. Therefore, delegations are kindly requested to keep the copies they receive throughout the annual session and use them during meetings. Nevertheless, a limited number of documents will be available from the documents distribution counter in room C-111.

I would also like to remind delegations to submit their letters of accreditation as soon as possible so that we may issue passes granting access to the conference rooms, as well as the list of participants. Delegations are kindly requested to carry with them either their CD passes or at least the identification provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The Conference will continue to have at its disposal the Council Chamber, room I, room C-108 and the secretariat conference room on the sixth floor. When delegations need such facilities for their consultations, I would ask that they coordinate their requests through the secretariat.

The PRESIDENT: I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of South Africa and Myanmar. Once we have heard the speakers inscribed for today, I intend to invite the Conference to consider, in an informal plenary meeting, the draft agenda for the 1999 session, as well as the requests received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during this session. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.499, which has been circulated by the secretariat. Thereafter, we shall resume the plenary meeting in order to formalize any agreements reached at the informal plenary.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa,
Mr. Peter Goosen.

Mr. GOOSEN (South Africa): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament, and to use this opportunity to welcome all of our new colleagues to the Conference.

Unlike the periods when your predecessors presided over the Conference at the start of the 1997 and 1998 sessions, the CD this year faces the prospect of a year in which we can again substantively begin to address issues which arise from its agenda. It is South Africa's continued belief that the Conference on Disarmament cannot continue to justify wasted time. In this context, the first order of business which faces us is the adoption of our agenda for 1999. We believe that the most efficient option would be for the Conference to immediately adopt the same agenda - based on the Decalogue - which we adopted last year. The Conference should then turn its attention to reaching agreement on the work which it actually has to do this year. It is essential that agreement be reached on this in the shortest possible time. This will need to be based on a recognition of the preparations which were made in 1998 and on the other imperatives which this Conference needs to deal with. The longer we delay or prevaricate on the decisions which the CD needs to make, the more difficult these decisions will become, and the more entrenched positions will become.

My delegation will work actively with you, Mr. President, to ensure a smooth start to our work. Success will, however, only be possible if all delegations approach this part of our session on a basis of mutual respect for, and recognition of, one another's positions. A denial of the need to address important issues will not, I fear, create the positive atmosphere in the Conference on Disarmament that is so essential when it stands on the brink of entering into negotiations which are not only substantive and important in their own right, but which will play a key role in continued international peace and security. For this reason, I believe that while we all support and wish to see the early commencement of the negotiations for a treaty dealing with fissile material, we should also see what can be done in the programme of work with regard to the other imperatives which face us. In saying this, let me be very clear: I do not support, and would not favour, the drawn-out and sterile debates which we have had on our programme of work, expansion of the CD's membership, etc. over the last two years. Time and swift action is of the essence if the CD is to continue to demonstrate its relevance to the international community as we prepare to enter the new millennium.

As I have already raised the issue of fissile material, let me now again state the South African position for the record. South Africa welcomed, and continues to welcome, the decision which was taken last year in the Conference on Disarmament to establish the Ad Hoc Committee under item 1 of the agenda entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" which will be negotiating the fissile materials treaty (FMT) on the basis of the Shannon report (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. The commencement and early conclusion of the FMT negotiations in the CD has long been an objective of the South African Government. The FMT, as the next major multilateral negotiation, following the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), is an integral part of the nuclear disarmament

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section of the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" adopted at the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference. South Africa sees the negotiations on an FMT as being of particular importance given the key nature of fissile material as a component of nuclear weapons. From our perspective, the negotiations which the CD is about to commence lie at the heart of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation issues. By achieving control over fissile material for weapons purposes we will not only be in a position to prevent the production of further nuclear weapons, but we would also be in a position to lay the groundwork for their eventual elimination. South Africa's approach to the negotiations for an FMT will be based on the objective that the treaty to be negotiated must be an integral measure of both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. While recognizing the difficulties which surround the issues relating to existing military stockpiles of fissile material, it is our intention to raise the stockpiles issue, as is provided for in the Shannon report, and we will, together with the other members of the Conference on Disarmament, seek the most appropriate ways of dealing with the matter.

I now wish to turn to the specific issue of nuclear disarmament. During 1998 we have seen a number of developments - both positive and negative - on the issue.

We have seen the outcome of the summit between the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation, and the strategic defence review undertaken by the United Kingdom, as well as the indications of transparency which that review contains.

There was also the unsuccessful conclusion of the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, although it is certainly our hope that the 1999 PrepCom will recoup the ground which was lost and successfully conclude its work.

India and Pakistan conducted nuclear-test explosions, and my Government has on several occasions made very clear its position on, and concerns about, these developments.

The Conference on Disarmament agreed to appoint the presidency to lead deliberations within the CD so as to explore how we could address the issue. It is South Africa's hope that the exaggerated fears of those who constantly warn of doom if the CD were to come anywhere near this issue have been placated. The sky did not fall in, and while it had been hoped that the Russian Duma would ratify the START II agreement by December of last year, the reason (at least as it was reported in the international media) did not have anything to do with the fact that the CD had been considering the nuclear disarmament issue, but rather as a consequence of events and actions taken which were unrelated to this body.

Eight Foreign Ministers of delegations represented in this Council Chamber came together on 9 June 1998 to issue a Joint Ministerial Declaration which contained the call for a new international agenda to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, through the pursuit, in parallel, of a series of mutually reinforcing measures at the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels.

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The fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly also adopted resolution 53/77 Y, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". An intrinsic element of both the Joint Ministerial Declaration and the General Assembly resolution was the call upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish an appropriate subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament and, to that end, pursue as a matter of priority its intensive consultations on appropriate methods and approaches with a view to reaching such a decision without delay.

In the latter context it will be recalled that on 20 January 1998 South Africa tabled before this Conference a draft decision, contained in document CD/1483, for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. That proposal was never put to a decision in the plenary of the CD. I therefore today again wish to formally lay this proposal, which reads as follows, before the Conference:

"1. The Conference on Disarmament decides to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to deliberate upon practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons as well as to identify if and when one or more such steps should be the subject of negotiations in the Conference.

"2. In discharging its function, the ad hoc committee will take into account existing proposals and views, as well as future initiatives on nuclear disarmament."

The text of this draft decision was very carefully negotiated so as to draw the widest possible support from among the delegations represented here. It was not the only proposal to be made. Before the CD there are also proposals which have been made by the distinguished delegations of Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Japan and members of the Group of 21. As the Presidential deliberations of 1998 clearly demonstrated, there is a desire and a willingness on the part of the broad majority of the CD, from across political groupings, to have the issue of nuclear disarmament dealt with in this body. South Africa is not intransigent on the wording of its proposal. We are more than willing to enter into intensive consultations to craft wording which would enjoy the necessary support. We are, however, convinced that to simply reinvent the "Presidency consultations" agreement of last year would be a mistake. The situation, both in the Conference itself and in the world outside, has moved on. When South Africa put forward its proposal last year, it was asked of us: "What about the fissile material negotiations?" It was clearly indicated that if there were progress on establishing the fissile material negotiations ad hoc committee, there would be a responsiveness to our concerns on the broader issue of nuclear disarmament.

As a consequence, Mr. President, I believe that it would only be fair to inform you and delegations that it is South Africa's intention to put forward the proposal contained in CD/1483 for the establishment of the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament at the formal meeting of the CD's plenary on 28 January 1999 for decision. The issue is of too great an importance for it to be hidden in the morass of CD procedural tactics, where

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decisions are taken behind closed doors. All delegations have had sufficient time - a year and eight days, to be precise - to consider the proposal's contents. Before that time, as I have already stated, my delegation and I stand ready to work - at times of your choosing - with you and the delegations represented here so as to achieve agreement on the exact content and wording of the decision.

To pre-empt the standing arguments which I am sure will be dusted off and rolled out for us all to hear again, let me emphasize that the wording of the draft decision was crafted carefully, so as not to raise the security concerns which are so closely associated with the nuclear disarmament issue. We believe that the necessary safeguards to achieve this have been made an intrinsic part of the wording. Nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. Substantive work in an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament of the Conference on Disarmament would not, and will not, undermine or threaten the nuclear disarmament negotiations between Russia and the United States. These would continue to be of paramount importance to the reduction of nuclear weapons and for their eventual elimination, and so also will future negotiations involving the other nuclear-weapon States. South Africa is opposed to so-called "linkages" as a matter of principle, and, unlike some, we have clearly, and on our own, demonstrated this. This statement is not an attempt to establish a linkage with the fissile materials negotiations. South Africa, now and in the future, fully supports the early commencement and conclusion of these negotiations.

What South Africa is seeking is a responsiveness not only to our own concerns, but to the concerns and interests of the overwhelming, and cross-group, majority of the CD. Our views are based on the firm belief that the efficient functioning of the CD can only be based on a respect for, and understanding of, the positions of others. A source of concern for South Africa has been the continuing refusal to recognize that the entire international community has an interest and a concern in nuclear disarmament. A refusal which has, inter alia, led to an inability to have this interest and concern accommodated in such forums as the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The proposal which we made last year, and which I am again formally tabling today, is intended to identify the middle ground and to avoid the trap of inaction created by the maximalist and minimalist poles which have too long dominated the nuclear disarmament debate and which have only delivered further polarization and demonstrated a paucity of results. The approach which South Africa follows squarely recognizes the challenges facing us; does not deny the steps which have been, and which are continuing to be, taken; does not avoid difficult issues, while also not seeking confrontation; and seeks to form the basis for a common approach for the achievement of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons through existing unilateral and bilateral processes and through complementary and mutually reinforcing steps at the plurilateral and multilateral levels.

Mr. President, I thank you and wish you success during your period of office.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Myanmar, Ambassador U Aye.

Mr. AYE (Myanmar): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its 1999 session. I am confident that your wide experience and diplomatic skills, amply demonstrated in your early endeavours to expedite our work for the current year, will assist us to achieve our common objectives. My delegation assures you of our fullest cooperation, and I take this opportunity to wish you every success in the fulfilment of your heavy responsibilities. I would also like to take this occasion to express our deep gratitude to your distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Ian Soutar, for the leadership and exemplary manner with which he guided our work during its critical phase last year. Our tribute also goes to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and the secretariat for the dedication and valuable support they had rendered to us. I take this occasion to warmly welcome Under-Secretary-General Mr. Dhanapala in our midst. I take pleasure in warmly welcoming new colleagues who had joined us since we last met: the Ambassadors of Colombia, Argentina, Slovakia, Sweden, Israel and Indonesia. The work of our Conference will no doubt be enriched by the valuable skills and wealth of experience that they bring with them.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which entered into force nearly three decades ago prescribed obligations for non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon States alike. The non-nuclear-weapon States parties undertake not to receive, acquire, control or attempt to develop nuclear weapons. On their part, the nuclear-weapon States parties agree not to transfer, assist or induce non-nuclear-weapon States to manufacture, acquire or control a nuclear weapon. Furthermore, the nuclear-weapon States undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith to end the nuclear arms race at an early date, with a commitment to nuclear disarmament. And here I emphasize again the long-standing and as yet unfulfilled commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to nuclear disarmament.

In the more recent past, sustained efforts had been exerted by both non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon States to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, leading to the historic decision to extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty indefinitely at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. But it is imperative to recall that the decision to extend the NPT indefinitely was reached as part of a "politically binding package" comprising, *inter alia*, a decision on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament". The programme of action set out in that decision identified a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty, a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate aim of eliminating those weapons. We are heartened to note that the CTBT was successfully concluded in 1996, despite all its shortcomings.

(Mr. Aye, Myanmar)

Decision CD/1547 that we took last year to establish, under agenda item I, an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile materials was a helpful step in line with that programme of action.

But recent developments do not give us cause for optimism. START II remains stalled in the bilateral nuclear disarmament process. Furthermore, the inability of the second PrepCom for the NPT Review Conference to further the nuclear disarmament agenda has adversely affected the confidence of many of the non-nuclear-weapon States to further refine the NPT. Lately, prolonged and heated debates on how we should proceed further on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament questions have transpired in the United Nations General Assembly, and the First Committee in particular, and in other forums as well. These developments establish beyond question that the NPT regime alone is insufficient to foster non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament goals. If the NPT is to continue to be the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime in fulfilling its promises, it must necessarily be complemented by a further network of multilateral arrangements and agreements. While we recognize and welcome bilateral endeavours, the Myanmar delegation sees the urgent need to complement such efforts through the multilateralization of the nuclear disarmament process here in the CD.

With this growing urgency in mind, the Myanmar delegation to the United Nations General Assembly again tabled a relevant resolution 53/77 X on nuclear disarmament which was adopted with 110 votes in favour. This was no ritual exercise, and the growing number of co-sponsors is demonstrative of the need to commence multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, as a parallel complement to bilateral negotiations, and the concept of de-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons. Such multilateralization of the nuclear disarmament process will do more to inspire confidence and to encourage the non-parties to accede to the NPT than all other measures previously attempted.

The Conference on Disarmament last year witnessed various efforts, at times transcending traditional political boundaries, to address the question of nuclear disarmament. To my delegation's regret, such initiatives were not accompanied by the necessary political will on the part of the major players to achieve some measure of progress. Much talk has echoed in this Conference and elsewhere for the urgency to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Yet practical results have been dismal as regard substantive measures directed toward the eventual and total elimination of nuclear weapons, which constitute the most destructive of such weapons of mass destruction. Hence, as a starting point, my delegation is in favour of establishing a full-fledged ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the CD, on a priority basis, to commence substantive work on the subject. We invite others holding similar views to lend their support to this endeavour. At the same time we are prepared to listen and consider with an open mind all approaches that could rapidly achieve our common objective.

We are encouraged by the adoption of resolution 53/77 I in the last United Nations General Assembly supporting negotiations in this Conference on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials. It is our hope that the

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momentum achieved last year will continue to exist and intensify when we get down to business on this item at this crucial first part of our 1999 session. To achieve some forward movement, technical feasibilities as well as the genuine concern of all delegations present should be adequately accommodated in any future fissban treaty. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the hard-working Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the fissban treaty, Ambassador Mark Moher, and his delegation for their valuable work last year.

Pending the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons, the non-nuclear-weapon States have a legitimate right to receive legally binding assurances from the nuclear-weapon States. This right is inalienable for those who have voluntarily renounced their nuclear options. Consequently we give our wholehearted support to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Security Assurances. We are also grateful to Ambassador Antonio de Icaza of Mexico and his delegation for his valuable contribution and leadership in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee last year.

While on the subject of security assurances, I would like to reiterate the importance of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States in various regions of the world. Such arrangements constitute effective measures to prevent the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons and contribute to nuclear disarmament. Moreover, they act as a mutually complementing measure which will no doubt assist in bringing about a single multilaterally and legally binding instrument on security assurances in the future. Myanmar is a State party to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty designed by the ASEAN countries to enhance peace, security and stability in the region. While recognizing the ongoing consultations between the States parties to this Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States, I would like to take this occasion to express our hope that the nuclear-weapon States will undertake necessary measures to sign and ratify the protocol at the earliest possible date.

We are all in agreement that outer space should be utilized solely for peaceful purposes for the benefit of humanity. The existing international legal instruments relating to outer space cannot effectively address either weaponization of outer space, or prevention of any perceived future arms race in it. Recent activities for developing and funding space-related weapons or weapons systems serve as a reminder for us to take timely and substantive actions to prevent the weaponization of outer space in the future. My delegation is in favour of establishing an ad hoc committee on prevention of an arms race in outer space this year. Our special thanks go to the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Palihakkara, who exerted all efforts to present a possible draft mandate for an ad hoc committee at the end of last year's session. We believe that the draft mandate, already enjoying a wide measure of support, could serve as a basis for our future work.

We note with satisfaction the entry into force last December of Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The Protocol prevents the use and transfer of non-detectable anti-personnel landmines, and restricts the use of non-self-destructing or self-deactivating mines to areas

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which are marked and monitored. This development no doubt gives impetus to mine-clearing activities as well as efforts to reduce dangers posed by mines to civilian populations. On the subject of APLs, I would like to take this occasion to convey sincere thanks to the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, Ambassador Campbell, who concluded that further efforts should be exerted this year to achieve forward movement on the issue. We may possibly look into the topic of APLs again this year by re-establishing the office of the Special Coordinator.

For the past two consecutive years, the Conference ventured into the possibility of making improvements, through the efforts of Special Coordinators on its agenda and effective functioning. Our appreciation goes to Special Coordinators Ambassador Náray and Ambassador Illanes for their contributions. Through the earnest efforts of our Special Coordinators, we achieved more understanding of various positions and heard useful thoughts and visions. But we were unable to move forward on these issues. Mindful of a tight disarmament agenda this year, it may not be feasible to continue such exercises on these two items for the current year.

I would now like to turn to another issue of paramount importance to my delegation - that of CD expansion. We welcome the dedicated efforts last year by the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Hofer, on the issue, which resulted in establishing that, firstly, there existed a consensus in principle in favour of expansion beyond the present membership, and secondly, without prejudging the present or future requests for membership, there was a possibility of taking a concrete decision leading to an expansion of five members, representing the major regional trends, namely Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia. Though this limitation to five fell short of the expectations of a great many CD delegations, including my own, we felt that this was the maximum we could achieve at the time, given the many constraints we faced. Hence it came as a great disappointment to us that the decision to admit the five was postponed to this year's session. Enough time has now elapsed and it would be unfair to delay the matter further. It is our earnest hope that the five be admitted as full members without any further delay by our taking an affirmative decision in accordance with the findings contained in Ambassador Hofer's report.

In concluding, I point out again that the 1999 disarmament calendar is heavily marked with activities of immense importance in addition to our work here in the CD. The work of the BWC Ad Hoc Group is gaining momentum and it may perhaps enter into maturity this year. It would be very demanding for smaller Geneva-based delegations with limited resources and personnel to contribute meaningfully and effectively to the important tasks entrusted to us if we are to have an over-ambitious programme of work in the CD at the same time. We should approach our programme of work with flexibility and with prudence.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Myanmar for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see there are none.

(The President)

As I mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, I shall now suspend the plenary and immediately convene an informal meeting open only to the members of the Conference in order to consider the draft agenda for the 1999 session and the requests received from non-members to participate in our work.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The informal plenary meeting indicated that further consultations are required on the agenda for this session, and I hope that we will be in a position to reach consensus on it by the next plenary meeting.

I should now formally like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the requests for participation in our work from States not members of the Conference. I will read them again in the formal session: Azerbaijan, Brunei Darussalam, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Iceland, Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Nepal, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, San Marino, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovenia, Sudan, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Uruguay and Zambia.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 21 January 1999, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.12 a.m.